



RHS Flower Shows 2026

Biosecurity Policy & Regulations

This document includes RHS policies on Plant Conservation and Non-Native Invasive plant species.

These policies and regulations minimise the risk posed by harmful plant pests and diseases as well as ensuring compliance with national and international plant movement laws.

If you have any questions regarding this information please contact:

showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk



Biosecurity and Plant Health

Applies to all shows and events operated by the RHS and all associated staff, exhibitors and contractors.

All plants and cut flowers intended for use or sale at RHS shows and events should be visibly free from pests and diseases.

Biosecurity and plant health inspections take place at all RHS shows and events. Plants (i.e. living plants and parts thereof) and cut flowers which do not meet regulations or are found to be unhealthy may be removed at the discretion of the RHS.

For any Biosecurity and Plant Health enquiries please contact showsplanthealth@rhs.org.uk

Biosecurity Policy *Abridged version, full version available on request

At RHS shows and events, plants (i.e. living plants and parts thereof) and cut flowers, originating from the UK, Europe and other continents are brought together, posing a unique biosecurity risk. To mitigate this risk and protect UK gardens, biodiversity and horticultural trades the RHS has developed Biosecurity Regulations specific to RHS shows and events. These are designed to minimise the risk of introducing harmful and invasive organisms to RHS shows, events and garden sites, and the threat of them spreading within and beyond a show, event or garden site.

Biosecurity Guidance for Sourcing Plants & Cut Flowers

When selecting a plant supplier it is important to consider:

- Reputation for quality and plant health
- Previous history supplying RHS shows and events
- Where the majority of plants or cut flowers will originate from, e.g. imported or UK grown?

Exhibitors and contractors should work with suppliers to ensure that all plants have been monitored on a UK nursery for a minimum of 3 months during a growing season, in particular imported woody plants (trees, shrubs, hedging, palms, tree ferns).

Please ensure that suppliers do not deliver poor quality or visibly unhealthy plants or cut flowers to an RHS show or event.

If directly importing plants or cut flowers please see [here](#) for information on the relevant import rules and pest and disease risks.

Biosecurity Regulations

UK Plant Passports *Does not apply to cut flowers

The UK plant passport scheme applies to professional operators selling plants to other professional operators, or distance selling plants. Only registered professional operators can issue UK plant passports, e.g. nurseries, design, landscaping and gardening businesses, horticultural societies and charities. The RHS is a registered professional operator. To register, click [here](#).

Plants sold on a show site must meet UK plant passport requirements:

- Plants sold to a non-professional operator (e.g. show visitor) do not require a plant passport.
- Plants sold to another professional operator (e.g. horticultural business) require a plant passport.
- Plants sold for delivery (e.g. mail order) require a plant passport.

All professional operators should keep UK plant passport records for 3 years.

Specimen Plants 3m high & above (Trees, shrubs, hedging, palms, tree ferns)

Imported specimen plants 3m high & above pose an increased risk of introducing new pests and diseases into the UK, in comparison to smaller plants. Large canopies, trunks and root balls make thorough plant health inspections difficult. Please adhere to the following:

- **Plant list submission:** Please include size, country of origin and supplier name for all specimen plants 3m high & above.
- **Supplier plant health checks:** Please ensure that suppliers check the health of specimen plants 3m high & above in advance of plants arriving on a show site. See 'Biosecurity Guidance for Sourcing Plants & Cut Flowers'.
- **Reject** woody plants with bore holes (entry & exit), 2-3mm and larger.
- **Reject** woody plants with bleeds and/ or discoloured bark.
- Fully UK grown specimen plants are preferred, e.g. grown in the UK from UK origin seed or cuttings.

Xylella fastidiosa *Does not apply to cut flowers

Xylella fastidiosa (Xf) is a bacterial disease of global concern, it is known to infect over 600 plant species, causing decline in health and death, there is no cure.

Xylella is not yet in the UK but imported high-risk host plants pose the greatest risk of introducing it.

*Cut flowers of high-risk host plants do not pose a risk and can be used at shows and events.

The following high-risk hosts must not be used or sold at RHS Shows:

Olea europaea (olive), Nerium oleander (oleander), Polygala myrtifolia (myrtle-leaf milkwort), Coffea spp. (coffee), Spartium junceum (Spanish broom)

The following high-risk hosts can be used or sold at RHS Shows if grown from UK origin cuttings or, if imported, have a UK plant passport showing origin as GB:

Lavandula spp. (lavender), Salvia rosmarinus (rosemary), Prunus dulcis (almond), shrubby Veronica spp. (formerly Hebe)

UK plant passports can be found on pots, labels and invoices, section D shows the country of origin.



Tobacco whitefly

Tobacco whitefly (*Bemisia tabacci*) can cause severe feeding damage and transmit over 110 different viruses. Symptoms include chlorotic spotting, growth distortion, and premature leaf drop.

Imported tender, tropical, sub-tropical plants and cut flowers should be checked thoroughly for signs of Tobacco whitefly when sourcing. This pest is notifiable, infested plants are subject to immediate destruction.

See images and details [here](#).

Spruce (Picea) & Ips typographus

Ips typographus (eight-toothed spruce bark beetle) feeds on live but significantly weakened spruce trees and will infest healthy trees if the population is high.

Outbreaks in Kent, Sussex and Surrey have been caused by beetles blown in from the continent.

In June 2024 the demarcated area (DMA) expanded to cover East Anglia as well as the south-east of England, the rest of the UK is a Pest Free Area (PFA).

Chelsea Flower Show & Sandringham Flower Show sit within the DMA.

- Allowed: Picea spp. under 3m but only with **permission from the Forestry Commission** to move to and from a show site.
- Prohibited: Picea spp. dead/ felled trees, logs and other material where bark remains.

Malvern Spring Festival & Badminton Flower Show sit within the PFA.

- Allowed: Picea spp. of any size allowed but must not originate from the DMA.
- Avoid: Picea spp. dead/ felled trees, logs and other material where bark remains. If essential to the exhibit this material **must not** originate from the DMA.

Further information can be found [here](#).

Oak (Quercus) & Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)

OPM (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) arrived in the UK on imported trees in 2005. The caterpillars feed on oak species causing severe defoliation, impacting tree health. They are a hazard to human and animal health as the hairs on the caterpillar cause eye, skin and respiratory irritation.

OPM is established in Greater London and the home counties, known as the Established Area. A Buffer Zone with a 10km Exclusion Zone surround this area to control further spread.

Chelsea Flower Show sits within the OPM Established Area. All Oak (*Quercus*) species of any size are prohibited from both shows, to comply with UK legislation which prevents spread into the UK Pest Free Area.

Malvern Spring Festival, Badminton Flower Show & Sandringham Flower Show sit within the Pest Free Area, therefore all oak (*Quercus*) species of any size can be exhibited at both shows. Please be vigilant for this pest when sourcing oak trees.

See [here](#) for further information.

Plant Conservation and Sharing of Plant Resources

Show exhibitors are responsible for ensuring that plants and plant material which they source and use at RHS shows are legally acquired and comply with relevant legislation. In the case of plant material of wild origin, this includes the national laws of the source country which may require permission to collect, export and/ or use their native biodiversity.

If you have any questions regarding the following please contact the show manager or relevant show team member.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

All plants exhibited or sold at RHS Shows must adhere to the Convention on Biological Diversity - www.cbd.int. Specifically, all plants must have been legally collected after December 29, 1993, with full CBD due diligence, legal consent from the host country, and where applicable access and benefit-sharing agreements with the host government. Additionally, exhibitors must comply with all relevant international, national, and regional biodiversity laws and policies.

Nagoya Protocol & Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)

Whilst horticultural use, per se, is not within the scope of the Nagoya Protocol (which seeks to enforce the principles of the CBD), plant collection is one of a number of factors which can be associated with the decline of plant populations in their natural habitats.

To check what ABS legislation each country is party to, including the Nagoya Protocol, please visit the [Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House website](#).

Botanical Institution Collection Loans

Where plants are being loaned by botanical institutions for use at RHS shows, exhibitors should confirm with the organisation concerned that the terms of acquisition permits this use.

CITES

Plant species where wild populations are known to be at risk are protected by laws which implement conservation conventions such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) or the Habitats Directive.

CITES protected plant species exhibited or sold at RHS shows should be accompanied by the relevant documentation, where appropriate. To check if a plant species intended for import and use at an RHS show is CITES regulated please visit [this page](#).

Export and import CITES permits will be required for regulated plant species, for further information visit [this page](#).

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Plant species listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are protected by law and cannot be exhibited or sold if wild collected, for the full plant list visit [this page](#).

UK Government

Please be aware that UK government agencies responsible for enforcement of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, CITES and Nagoya Protocol have authorisation to visit and inspect RHS shows without notification.

Non-native Invasive Plant Species

A number of plant species are regulated under UK invasive species legislation, the key one being the EU Retained Regulation 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species, as amended through The Invasive Non-native Species Regulations 2019.

The use or sale of non-native invasive plant species at RHS shows must be in line with current UK legislation. Please refer to the resources below to ensure plants meet legislative requirements.

RHS Resource

Schedule 9, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Section 14A

Rules in England & Wales

Rules in Scotland Scotland

Gunnera: Large leaf species only (came into effect in 2024)

Large leaf Gunnera species must not be brought to RHS shows due to risk of inadvertently exhibiting an invasive plant as defined by UK legislation. Research published by the RHS indicates that plants widely grown and sold in the UK as *Gunnera manicata* are the invasive species *G. tinctoria* or a hybrid of *G. manicata* with *G. tinctoria* (*G. × cryptica*). Under the Invasive Alien Species regulation, an invasive species includes any hybrids of that species. As a consequence, the hybrid *G. × cryptica* is subject to the same restrictions as *G. tinctoria*. While *G. manicata* is not considered invasive, due to the lack of certainty over identification of this species in cultivation, large leaved gunneras must not be used in exhibits, or offered for sale, at RHS shows.

UK Government

Please be aware that the Non-Native Species Inspectorate have authorisation to visit and inspect RHS shows without notification.

